

Dartmouth College Oral History Project  
The War Years at Dartmouth  
Interview with Cliff Jordan  
By Mary Donin  
February 7, 2008

JORDAN: Well, it was interesting because I went to a small prep school on the outskirts of Boston. And out of a class of, I think 24 or 25, 17 or 18 went to Harvard. And it was sort of a prep school for Harvard. And I was being interviewed by the headmaster and I'll never forget. He sat there and he said, "Are you going to college, Cliff?" And I said, "Yes. I've applied and I'm hoping to get to Dartmouth." And he said—he looked down and stroked his long nose and said, "Surely you jest. You're not going to that country club of the north."  
[Laughter] And that was my introduction to Dartmouth.

DONIN: How is it that you knew...how had you learned anything about Dartmouth?

JORDAN: Just reading about it.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

JORDAN: I didn't really know anyone that went there.

DONIN: Uh-huh. What appealed to you about it when you were looking for colleges?

JORDAN: Well, I liked the outdoor atmosphere of it. I liked the fact that, you know, it had a lot of outdoor material with it. I just liked getting away from the Boston area.

DONIN: Mm-hm. So off you went to Dartmouth.

JORDAN: Right.

DONIN: Great! So let's see, you matriculated then—you arrived in the fall of 1941.

JORDAN: That's right.

DONIN: So at that point the United States wasn't in the war yet. So you probably had a pretty nice first term there, right.

JORDAN: Oh, it was very good, yes.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Got any particular memories of where you lived or who your roommates were? What dorm you were in?

JORDAN: No, I just... The usual memories of the dorms and playing sports and...

DONIN: Were you a good athlete?

JORDAN: Not particularly but I enjoyed doing sports.

DONIN: Uh huh. What did you do?

JORDAN: Well, I played a little football, a little soccer.

DONIN: Oh good. Well you must have been pretty good then.

JORDAN: Contact sports. And then later on I did hockey.

DONIN: Oh yeah. So you must have been a pretty good athlete then.

JORDAN: Good enough to get by.

DONIN: And what dorm did you live in?

JORDAN: Topliff.

DONIN: Oh, yeah. It's currently under reconstruction. You probably know that.

JORDAN: No, I didn't know that.

DONIN: Yes, they're gutting it. There's scaffolding on the outside and everything.

JORDAN: Oh.

DONIN: Got any good stories about your roommates in Topliff?

JORDAN: No, I can't remember any of them, to be honest.

DONIN: But do you remember whether you were subjected to any of the sort of hazing stuff that went on by the upperclassmen to the freshmen? You had to walk around with a beanie on, didn't you?

JORDAN: I guess. I don't remember the hazing.

DONIN: Oh, well that's good.

JORDAN: To be honest with you.

DONIN: You put it out of your mind.

JORDAN: Either that or I didn't have it.

DONIN: Right. So then in fall of '41 and along comes December 7<sup>th</sup>.

JORDAN: Pearl Harbor.

DONIN: Yes.

JORDAN: Right.

DONIN: Do you remember where you were when that happened?

JORDAN: Oh, yes, I was in Hanover and listening to a radio, as everyone else was, wondering, you know, wondering what impact this would have on your own life.

DONIN: Yes.

JORDAN: And what it meant in terms of service and whether you'd go in the Army or the Air Force or the Navy or what.

DONIN: And were some of your classmates ready to sort of sign up right away? Or were they going to wait to be drafted?

JORDAN: I think a number of them waited to be drafted. Others enlisted and got in just before being drafted.

DONIN: Right.

JORDAN: You pretty well knew that if you didn't enlist, you'd get drafted.

DONIN: Sure thing. Well, before we get into the whole Army Air Corps which I think is what you were in. Do you remember matriculating and getting your card from President Hopkins? Meeting him?

JORDAN: No.

DONIN: I guess that happened first thing when you got up there.

JORDAN: I can't remember it. I'm sorry.

DONIN: That's all right. Just checking. So how was it that... You did end up in the Army Air Corps, is that right?

JORDAN: Yes. That was a mistake. I had decided to enlist to avoid being drafted.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

JORDAN: So I went down and I talked to some Army sergeant. And we talked about various options. And he found out that I went to Dartmouth, and I had skied at Dartmouth. And I liked the out of doors. And he thought that I might go well in the—they had Tenth Mountain Infantry training out in the west. So he said, "Wouldn't that be good for you?" I said, "That would be great." I said, "I'd love to get in there if you could get me into it." And he said, "Well, with your background, it's almost a sure thing." So I was happy about that. But two weeks later, by this time I was in service. And two weeks later I was called up with a lot of others. Got aboard this troop train. And as we sat there chugging away from Boston, why, a sergeant came through and said, "Welcome, gentlemen. You are all now in the Army Air Corps."

DONIN: Uh-oh.

JORDAN: And that's what I said, [laughter] since I didn't sign up to get into the damned Army Air Corps. As it turned out, it was probably all right, probably better for me than if I'd got in the ski troops.

DONIN: Did you ever find out what the glitch was that you didn't get into the Tenth Mountain Division?

JORDAN: No. I just think it was.... They were—I don't know. I started to ask around. Finally somebody said, Forget it. You'll never know the reason.

DONIN: Yes. Things were pretty hectic in those days.

JORDAN: Well, they had a lot of places to fill. And they just grabbed whoever came along and put them in the slot.

DONIN: Yes. So how much time did you.... So how many terms did you stay at Dartmouth before you joined the Army Air Corps?

JORDAN: Two.

DONIN: Oh. Two terms or two years?

JORDAN: I was two terms.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So you at least—you completed your freshman year.

JORDAN: Yes.

DONIN: Oh, that's good. So off you went to the Army Air Corps. And returned, let's see, what was I reading about you? Well, you came back after a couple of years, right?

JORDAN: I think longer than that.

DONIN: So you didn't actually graduate with your.... They didn't actually have a graduation ceremony in 1945. And you weren't there anyway.

JORDAN: No, I didn't get out 'til '48.

DONIN: Oh, I see. Wow!

JORDAN: I came back and resumed my studies at Dartmouth. Actually we were married when I came back.

DONIN: When did that happen? While you were in the Air Corps?

JORDAN: Yes.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So you came back as a married vet.

JORDAN: Correct.

DONIN: And where did you live? You were in some of the married housing?

JORDAN: Lived in a place called Wigwam Circle.

DONIN: Oh, yes. Lot of stories about Wigwam Circle.

JORDAN: Yes.

DONIN: Did you enjoy it there?

JORDAN: It was fine.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And how did your wife enjoy it, your new wife?

JORDAN: Well, it was a hard adjustment for her. I think because first of all she was from the Midwest, from Ohio, and had never been to the East before.

DONIN: Oh, gee.

JORDAN: She had an adjustment to make. Plus adjusting to, you know, my life at Dartmouth with all these people who were strangers to both of us.

DONIN: Sure. Did she get to be friends with some of the other wives in Wigwam?

JORDAN: Oh, sure. Yeah.

DONIN: People talk about having some pretty happy times there even though they had no money, that it was a happy time to be living there. You know, the war was over.

JORDAN: We got along fine. We were happily married.

DONIN: So what were you majoring in?

JORDAN: English and history.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

JORDAN: Actually when I say that, I majored in education because I was going to teach.

DONIN: Oh, yes!

JORDAN: And when you're going to teach, you had to take courses in the subjects you were going to teach.

DONIN: Right.

JORDAN: So I got enough courses in education to get my teaching certificate. But then I had to teach two subjects, and mine were English and history.

DONIN: Ah-hah. So did you have any particular teachers when you got back to Dartmouth that were memorable to you?

JORDAN: No, that's the sad thing about it. I know some—a number of people did. But the teachers I had were fine but none very memorable.

DONIN: They didn't stick in your mind.

JORDAN: No.

DONIN: So when you left Mr. Hopkins was president. But when you returned, you had a new president, didn't you? John Dickey.

JORDAN: Yes.

DONIN: Do you remember meeting him or interacting with him at all?

JORDAN: Well I knew him because I came back and worked at Dartmouth. Got to know him then. But I think I met him once when I was a student.

DONIN: As a student. Right. So you finally graduated when? 1950?

JORDAN: I'm sorry, I don't remember. You'd have to go back in the records and check.

DONIN: Well, it's no surprise. It seems like in those years everybody's education was so chopped up that they graduated at all different times. So how was it being back there as sort of a more mature person. You were married. You'd been through the war for a number of years. Do you think you were a better student when you got back than before?

JORDAN: I think it made a difference, yes. I think I was.... My background in service has given me a better perspective than I would have had if I'd just gone to Dartmouth.

DONIN: Without being in the service.

JORDAN: Right, Yes.

DONIN: Yes, right. So then you, when you graduated from Dartmouth—

JORDAN: Yes.

DONIN: You left Hanover for a few years, right?

JORDAN: Right.

DONIN: To go down to the—where did I read it? Did you go to the Pingry School?

JORDAN: No, Peddie.

DONIN: Oh, Peddie School. That's what it was, the Peddie School. Right, right. And then you came back to Dartmouth.

JORDAN: Right.

DONIN: Must have been a sort of different place when you got back.

JORDAN: Well, it was the same in many ways. But I was glad to get back here. I taught at Peddie for two or three years. But I soon learned that teaching was not my career.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

JORDAN: It was just not for me.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: So when I came back to Dartmouth, I was working in the public relations here. It was fund raising. It was a better field for me.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. That was a good fit. Well, it certainly must have helped in your work to have been an alum there because you knew so many people, right?

JORDAN: Oh, yes. Yes. It made it a lot easier.

DONIN: Right.

JORDAN: I think most of the people that were working at the time then were Dartmouth grads.

DONIN: Yes, at that time I think you're right. Now before you graduated did you get to participate in the Great Issues course that President Dickey got started?

JORDAN: Yes.

DONIN: Did you enjoy that?

JORDAN: I only took one Great Issues course.

DONIN: Right. That's what I meant to say. You enjoyed those classes, though, the Great Issues classes.

JORDAN: Yes.

DONIN: There was more than one...I mean you went to it. You had an assignment, had to read the *New York Times* and compare it to another newspaper pertaining to one particular event in history.

JORDAN: Yes.

DONIN: And you enjoyed that? A lot of people did, I gather.

JORDAN: Well, that was just one of the things they did.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

JORDAN: No, it was a good subject, and I was delighted to be able to take them.

DONIN: Right. And what was your impression of President Dickey when he was there—when you were there as a student?

JORDAN: Oh, I liked him. I thought he was a good president. Yes. Just right for the job, as they say.

DONIN: Yes, yes. Well, a lot of people thought that way, I think. Now did you belong to a fraternity?

JORDAN: Uh no.

DONIN: Never joined?

JORDAN: I was asked several times. But since I was a married student, you know. A married student wasn't encouraged to join fraternities.

DONIN: Right. What kind of social life was there for the married students?

JORDAN: Not much.

DONIN: Not much?

JORDAN: No.

DONIN: You probably just socialized among yourselves, I guess.

JORDAN: We interacted among them, other married students. The classmates, you know, people you knew. But there was enough to do. I mean, we had classes to do and I had jobs to work at.

DONIN: What jobs were you working?

JORDAN: I don't remember. I just remember I was working.

DONIN: Yes. I guess there were a lot of part time jobs that were available. People were working at the Mary Hitchcock Hospital, all kinds of different jobs to earn some extra money. Was your wife able to get any kind of work?

JORDAN: I don't think so.

DONIN: Uh huh.

JORDAN: First of all, she got pregnant, so...

DONIN: Oh well, that sort of ended that, didn't it? Yes. So was your first child born there in Hanover?

JORDAN: Yes.

- DONIN: Oh, isn't that nice. So he's truly a Dartmouth baby.
- JORDAN: Right.
- DONIN: That's great. Well, so what was Hanover like in those days. It was a lot different that it is now.
- JORDAN: Oh, in many ways I suppose it was. But in other ways I don't think it was. They still had some pretty interesting local stores and the college dorms were there. College life was much the same I think.
- DONIN: When you got back I guess all the things that had been shut down during the War, like the daily newspaper and the fraternities and some of the traditions that had been out on hold, I guess that was all back up and running when you got back?
- JORDAN: Mostly, yes.
- DONIN: So it probably seemed pretty much the same as when you left except you had a wife with you.
- JORDAN: That's right. And then a baby.
- DONIN: Right. Exactly. Did you have a particular Dartmouth tradition that you enjoyed, as an undergrad? You know, whether it was Carnival or Green Key weekend or anything like that?
- JORDAN: No, not particularly. I mean, I know what they were. Later on, of course, when I worked at Dartmouth, I got more involved with them. They were events, you know?
- DONIN: Yes. OK, now, what else do I need to ask you? Oh. Did you feel, because you went away and then came back a few years later and didn't actually graduate with your class, did you feel that affected your class unity because you guys were all separated and spread apart and then graduated at all different times? You know, did it have an impact on how much loyalty you felt to your class?
- JORDAN: That's a difficult question to answer because in my case, you didn't feel a lot of loyalty to your class because your class was spread out over everywhere.

DONIN: Did the loyalty or class unity, did it improve over the years afterwards because people made an effort to have reunions and keep everybody in touch with one another?

JORDAN: Oh yes, I think it definitely got better. And of course, I was one of those that worked at it.

DONIN: Yes. That was part of your job probably.

JORDAN: Right.

DONIN: But when you graduated, there really was a lack of sort of connection to your class because you guys were all spread all over the place and broken up.

JORDAN: Well, most of us graduated together with others who went directly in the class of '45. They were close enough so that, you know, it was part of one and the same.

DONIN: Right. I suppose there were a few members of your class who, for medical reasons were able to complete their education uninterrupted because they couldn't go in the service.

JORDAN: Oh, I'm sure there were.

DONIN: But not many of them.

JORDAN: No.

DONIN: Ok, well I think we're done then with this interview unless you've got anything else you can think of about those years.

JORDAN: Are those the years you're going to write about?

DONIN: Those are the years. The 1940s. Yes. And a lot of people said, you know, the same as you did. That you went away to war and came back and it felt a little different because you were older and more mature and a lot of you had wives with you and it wasn't the traditional undergraduate experience.

JORDAN: Oh no. And not all, but most of us didn't enjoy fraternities which was another thing. Most of the undergraduates joined fraternities. That was the thing to do.

DONIN: Yes.

JORDAN: You know after you got through freshman year.

DONIN: That was the way you lived your social life was through the fraternities.

JORDAN: That's right.

DONIN; Right.

JORDAN: And particularly a place like Dartmouth where, you know, you weren't in a big city area where there was a lot going on.

DONIN: Exactly. Were you a member of the Outing Club?

JORDAN: Yes. Oh, yes.

DONIN: And that was probably a nice sort of alternative way to get together with people.

JORDAN: Well, that was because of, you know, they were people like me who liked the out-of-doors. Liked to do things out-of-doors.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Skiing and hiking and such.

JORDAN: Yes.

DONIN: Yes. OK, I'm going to turn off these recorders now.

JORDAN: Fine.

**[End of Interview]**